

personal
BOUNDARIES

HOW TO IDENTIFY, IMPLEMENT & NEGOTIATE

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BOUNDARIES

WHAT ARE THEY?

DEFINITION

“Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships.”

They are basically clear instructions (followed by actions) that tell everyone you interact with what is and is not acceptable and appropriate.

Boundaries act like a filter; letting the good things through and keeping the unwanted things out.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Personal boundaries allow us to be our authentic selves, regulate our nervous systems and create an overall feeling of safety in our bodies and in our relationships.

They are also key to allowing us to experience self-love by feeling like we are being true to authentic selves.

So yeah... Quite important.



BOUNDARIES

WHAT ARE THEY?

Different psychologists and researchers have different categories for boundaries but I prefer the four containers that the Holistic Psychologist uses that we can fit all the others into. They are;

PHYSICAL – PHYSICAL BODY, PHYSICAL CONTACT etc

SELF:

Awareness and execution of your own self care.
(Nutrition, sleep, exercise etc)

Ability to tune into your energetic needs. Making good choices between activity and rest.

OTHERS:

Communicate preferences around personal space and contact.

Ability to sit with uncomfortable feelings while others express their own activity and rest needs.

MENTAL – THOUGHTS, VALUES, OPINIONS, BELIEFS etc

SELF:

Knowledge of, and connection to, your own internal world.

Exerts choice on whether or not you share this with the world around you.

OTHERS:

Ability to hold separate thoughts/beliefs and tolerate others doing the same.

Ability to choose whether others share their internal world with you or not.

RESOURCES – EMOTIONS, TIME, ENERGY, MONEY etc

SELF:

Awareness of and ability to cope with your own emotions.

Ability to disengage when overwhelmed.

Ability to exert control over your resources.

OTHERS:

Ability to sit through uncomfortable feelings allowing others to assume responsibility to coping.

Allow others to disengage when overwhelmed.

Allow others to exert choice on where their time and resources are spent.

SPIRITUAL – CONNECTION, OR LACK THEREOF, TO A “HIGHER POWER”

SELF:

Ability to define your own personal connection to a higher power.

Ability to be at peace without it.

OTHERS:

Allow others to define their own personal connection even if it differs from your own.

IDENTIFICATION

— FINDING YOURS! —

Obviously; it's pretty hard to change something that you're not aware of. So let's figure out what personal boundaries you have...

First thing to understand is that at the University of Berkeley they have divided boundaries up into three traits; RIGID, POROUS & HEALTHY.

Rigid is when someone keeps people at a distance, Porous is when someone gets overly involved, Healthy is, well, healthy, you get that...

RIGID	POROUS	HEALTHY
<p>Avoids intimacy and close relationships.</p> <p>Unlikely to ask for help.</p> <p>Has few close relationships.</p> <p>Very protective of personal information.</p> <p>May seem detached, even with romantic partners.</p> <p>Keeps others at a distance to avoid the possibility of rejection.</p>	<p>Overshares personal information.</p> <p>Difficulty saying "no" to the requests of others.</p> <p>Overinvolved with other's problems.</p> <p>Dependent on the opinions of others.</p> <p>Accepting of abuse or disrespect.</p> <p>Fears rejection if they do not comply with others.</p>	<p>Values own opinions.</p> <p>Doesn't compromise values for others.</p> <p>Shares personal information in an appropriate way (does not over or under share).</p> <p>Knows personal wants and needs and can communicate them.</p> <p>Accepting when others say "no" to them.</p>

SOME THINGS TO UNDERSTAND:

- Most people have a mix of different boundary types. For example, someone could have healthy boundaries at work, porous boundaries in romantic relationships, and a mix of all three types with their family. One size does not fit all!
- The appropriateness of boundaries depends heavily on setting. What's appropriate to say when you're out with friends might not be appropriate when you're at work.
- Some cultures have very different expectations when it comes to boundaries. For example, in some cultures it's considered wildly inappropriate to express emotions publicly. In other cultures, emotional expression is encouraged.

COMMON FEARS AROUND SETTING BOUNDARIES

- Fear of not being loving
- Fear of being judged/misunderstood
- Fear of loss/abandonment
- Fear of hurting someone
- Guilt/Shame
- Fear of being controlling
- Being frozen/paralyzed

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR BOUNDARIES

First, you have to recognize certain boundaries (Physical, Emotional, Resources, Spiritual) have been (unknowingly) violated.

Signs they have been violated:

- Deep feelings of anger, confusion, disorientation.
- You feel the desire to pull away from people.
- Shame or a sense of being exposed.
- Exploration of the conflicting messages that get in the way of setting boundaries.

USE THIS WORKSHEET TO IDENTIFY YOURS

PHYSICAL – PHYSICAL BODY, PHYSICAL CONTACT etc

VIOLATION

Eg; A family member, co-worker, friend etc makes inappropriate comments about your appearance.

CORRECTION

Eg; You no longer want to be around those types of comments.

Your examples;

Your examples;

MENTAL – THOUGHTS, VALUES, OPINIONS, BELIEFS etc

VIOLATION

Eg; A family member, co-worker, friend etc constantly invalidates your opinions and values.

Your examples;

CORRECTION

Eg; You no longer care about their opinions about your values and don't wish to engage in arguing about them.

Your examples;

RESOURCES – EMOTIONS, TIME, ENERGY, MONEY etc

VIOLATION

Eg; A family member, co-worker, friend etc constantly calls you to complain about their relationship issues.

Your examples;

CORRECTION

Eg; You no longer want to take calls from them when your aren't mentally & physically prepared to help them.

Your examples;

SPIRITUAL – CONNECTION, OR LACK THEREOF, TO A “HIGHER POWER”

VIOLATION

Eg; Your parents call urging you to go to the church of your childhood religion even though you are now an adult.

Your examples;

CORRECTION

Eg; You would like space to explore a version of spirituality that resonates with your adult self.

Your examples;



IMPLEMENTATION

LET'S DO IT!

This is where we start to put our personal boundaries into place in a strong and firm way.

This is where you can feel powerful in your new self-awareness, have more clarity between safe and unsafe people, create a new relationship with your limits BUT, it can also be a very **MESSY** stage.

CLARITY

We need to get very clear on what our boundaries are so that they are clear to the person hearing them.

Now that you've identified what boundaries you want to set in your life we can articulate them clearly.

Use "I" statements. For example, instead of saying "You always interrupt me," you might say, "I feel disrespected when I'm interrupted during conversations. I need to be able to finish my thoughts without being cut off." This makes the other person less defensive.

Be specific. For example, instead of saying "I need more space," you might say, "I need an hour of alone time each evening to unwind and recharge."

Use a script. If you find that you get flustered in the moment then you can remember (or even read from) a script.

Here's a sentence you can use to find that clarity for any particular boundary.

"I understand [insert your understanding of their behavior]. When you [insert the problematic behavior], I often feel [insert your feelings] and understand this is something you may not be aware of. In the future [insert what you would/would not like to happen again]. If [insert original problematic behavior] happens again, I will [insert how you will begin to respond differently to meet your own need]. I am making these changes so that [insert your intention for your new boundary] and hope you can understand that this is important to me."

EXAMPLES;

*"I understand you may be **uncomfortable with my new food choices**. When you consistently comment on **what I am or am not eating**, I often feel uncomfortable **eating around you** and I understand you may not be aware of this and may not be intending to make me uncomfortable. In the future, I would like to **avoid talking about food or food choices all together**. If commenting on **my food choices** happens again, I will **remove myself from our conversation or activity we are engaging in**. I am making these changes so that we can maintain our relationship as I care about you. I hope you can understand this is important to me."*

*"I understand you may be **unhappy in your relationship and are wanting to be heard**. When you consistently **call me to vent** I often feel **emotionally depleted** and I understand you may not be aware of this and may not be intending to make me feel that way. In the future, **I may not be able to always be available when you feel you want to vent**. If you continue to **call me for each relationship issues you're having**, **I may not always be able to support you at that exact time**. I am making these changes so that we can maintain our relationship as I care about you. I hope you can understand this is important to me."*

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- **TIMING! TIMING! TIMING!** It's always best to try and find an emotionally neutral time. Whilst boundaries could and should be used during conflicts, it's always better if you have communicated them beforehand so that you are aren't trying to explain new concepts during emotional stress.
- **Prepare for Resistance:** Not everyone will respond positively when you set boundaries. Be prepared for some resistance and have a plan for how you'll handle it.
- Focus on how **YOU** will begin to respond differently in the future instead of focusing only on the other person changing. You're the only one you can actually control, unfortunately!
- **PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!** This can all be quite scary! Make sure you practice implementing boundaries in your safest relationships first. This can help you gain the confidence so that you can do it assertively in all the others as well.
- Get some **CANNED PHRASES** that you can pull out at any time;
 - "Thanks for the offer/invite though that is not something I can do right now/this week."
 - "I wish I could but now is not a good time sorry."
 - "Unfortunately, that's just not going to work for me."
 - "I'm not going to be able to _____"
 - "No, thank you."
- **Seek Support:** If you're finding it difficult to implement your boundaries, don't hesitate to seek support. This could be from a trusted friend, family member, or a mental health professional.

NEGOTIATION

LET'S RE-DO IT!

Once you have a boundary it's very important to not go back to where you were before. We don't want to start repeating old patterns again.

WHAT YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

From others:

- Emotional reactivity
- Confusion
- Push back
- Snarky comments ("You've changed...what's this new age sh*t...")

In yourself:

- Fear, doubt
- "Feel Bads" (shame, guilt, selfishness, etc)
- Impulse to go back to old patterns

BUT... THERE ARE ALWAYS EXCEPTIONS!

Now that we've had some practice setting boundaries we can start to assess what boundaries are too rigid, are being used for control or are too one-sided.

We're not always in the clearest space when we first set them, or maybe we have healed some old wounds that no longer need protecting with our boundaries so it's ok to renegotiate them.

Boundaries can be amended but it's good to know what is **NEGOTIABLE** and what is **NON-NEGOTIABLE**.



NEGOTIABLE vs NON-NEGOTIABLE

Negotiable personal boundaries are those that have some flexibility and can be adjusted based on the situation, relationship, or context. They are open to discussion and compromise.

Non-negotiable personal boundaries, on the other hand, are firm lines that you are not willing to cross under any circumstances. These are often tied to your core values and principles, and violating them can lead to significant distress or harm.

EXAMPLES:

NON-NEGOTIABLE

"You can't physically touch me during an argument."

NEGOTIABLE

"You can express your anger; as long as it's on the other side of the room and not directed at me."

NON-NEGOTIABLE

"I will not visit your parents if no one else is with us."

NEGOTIABLE

"I'm willing to visit your parents as long as it is a group experience, and you assure me you will stand up for me if someone says something hurtful."

NON-NEGOTIABLE

"You cannot post about personal or private details about me or our relationship."

NEGOTIABLE

"You can share things that I have agreed on and feel comfortable and safe with you sharing."

Sometimes you need to communicate **BOTH** versions of the boundary to make it clear. Every situation and boundary is different, some have zero room for negotiation, some have a little or even a lot of room.

What we all need to remember is that any relationship we have is a two way street and the boundaries in that relationship are in constant flux. Even the completely non-negotiable boundary can become flexible in the future and vice-versa.

Both people in the relationship need to communicate and negotiate their boundaries to find a middle ground that works for both.

You are both working towards a solution, even if that solution is a dissolution of a relationship that no longer serves you.

FINAL THOUGHTS

SUM IT UP...

So those are the three stages of creating personal boundaries; identification, implementation and negotiation. There's just one last piece to the puzzle...

CONSEQUENCES

What happens if you set personal boundaries but the other person does not respect them, acknowledge them or adhere to them?

Some violations are severe and need severe consequences; so *"Don't not touch me sexually without my permission"* can turn into *"If you touch me sexually without my permission then I will be calling the police."*

The consequences don't *have* to be inserted into the original boundary, they can be added after the boundary has been broken, or, you can make them clear from the start.

But even less severe boundaries may need a consequence to make them adhered to; *"If you don't adhere to this boundary we can no longer spend any time together."*

FINAL FINAL THOUGHTS...

As I said at the start; Personal boundaries allow us to be our authentic selves, regulate our nervous systems and create an overall feeling of safety in our bodies and in our relationships.

They are also key to allowing us to experience self-love by feeling like we are being true to authentic selves.

If you want a happier, more stress free life then you have, and I mean **HAVE**, to identify, implement and negotiate your boundaries in all facets of your life.

And the cool thing is... You can do it. You now have the awareness and understanding to make the changes needed.

Much love,



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Jimi Hunt is a writer, speaker and mentor around the topic of Mental Fitness with a passion for empowering people to help themselves become happier and healthier.

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Thanks for reading this guide to creating personal boundaries. Good luck. Go well.